

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

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USMISSION NATO
USLO PEKING
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AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS.TODEP 202 MANILA ONLYZFF

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS MARR/IO
SUBJECT: DIEGO GARCIA HEARING

1. WEISS, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF POLITICO-MILITARY AFFAIRS
TESTIFIED FOR DEPARTMENT ON MARCH 6 BEFORE HAMILTON HFAC
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA REGARDING US
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INDIAN OCEAN POLICY IN GENERAL AND DIEGO GARCIA EXPANSION
PLANS IN PARTICULAR. BUCHANAN AND GILMAN ALSO WERE IN
ATTENDANCE FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEE. PRESS AND DIPLOMATIC CORPS
ALSO ABUNDANTLY VISIBLE INCLUDING TASS, TIMES OF INDIA, AND
THE STATESMAN (INDIA) PLUS EMBASSY OBSERVERS FROM SOVIET
UNION, UK, AND AUSTRALIA.

2. AFTER READING HIS PREPARED STATEMENT (BEING POUCHED),

WEISS WAS SUBJECTED TO A WIDE RANGE OF QUESTIONS BY THE THREE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS. HAMILTON, AS EXPECTED, TOOK THE LEAD IN ASKING BROAD NUMBER OF SEARCHING BUT NON-ANTAGONISTIC QUESTIONS WHICH BASICALLY CENTERED ON IDENTIFICATION OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA, THE EXTENT OF THE MILITARY THREAT IN THE REGION TO THESE INTERESTS, AND THE RATIONALE FOR INCREASED US NAVAL DEPLOYMENTS AND THE EXPANSION OF NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITIES AT DIEGO GARCIA. HAMILTON ALSO PROBED EXTENSIVELY ON THE PUBLICIZED ADVERSE REACTIONS OF MOST INDIAN OCEAN LITTORAL STATES TO THE DIEGO UPGRADE AS WELL AS WHY CONGRESS SHOULD MOVE NOW ON APPROVING THE DIEGO CONSTRUCTION PLANS PENDING FURTHER APPROVING THE DIEGO CONSTRUCTION PLANS PENDING FURTHER INITIATIVES ON OUR PART WITH THE SOVIETS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF NAVAL ARMS LIMITATIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. HAMILTON ALSO REGISTERED SKEPTICISM THAT THE EXPANSION PLANS SUBMITTED BY DOD TO THE CONGRESS ARE NO MORE THAN A PRELUDE TO SUBSEQUENT EXPANSION OF THE DIEGO FACILITY. FINALLY, HAMILTON REQUESTED CONSIDERABLE STATISTICAL DATA FOR THE RECORD REGARDING THE SIZE, CHARACTER, AND GENERAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO US AND SOVIET NAVAL DEPLOYMENTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. IN RESPONSE TO FOREGOING, WEISS DREW HEAVILY ON HIS INITIAL STATEMENT AND SUPPLEMENTARY Q'S AND A'S, THE ESSENCE OF WHICH HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN FURNISHED ADDRESSEES. WEISS SUCCEEDED IN GETTING ON THE RECORD (A) THERE IS A GENUINE NEED FOR THE FACILITY; (B) WE HAVE A VARIETY OF INTERESTS IN THE AREA WHICH GO BEYOND THE PROBLEM OF INCREASED SOVIET PRESENCE; (C) HAVING SUCH A FACILITY WOULD IN NO WAY INHIBIT ANY SUBSEQUENT ARMS CONTROL EFFORTS WHICH MAY BE NEGOTIABLE BUT, BY THE SAME TOKEN, GIVEN THE BROAD RANGE OF OUR INTERESTS, ANY CONCEIVABLE AGREEMENT WOULD NOT HAVE THE EFFECT OF ELIMINATING THE NEED FOR A NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THUS FOR THE DIEGO FACILITY.

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3. BUCHANAN AND GILMAN'S QUESTIONS GENERALLY REFLECTED SUPPORT FOR WEISS' OPENING STATEMENT. BUCHANAN ASKED IF THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT IN THE UK WAS EXPECTED TO HAVE ANY ADVERSE EFFECT ON PRIOR HEATH GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO DIEGO EXPANSION PLANS. BUCHANAN ALSO INQUIRED IF THE CONDITIONS OF OUR USE OF DIEGO WOULD BE UNDULY RESTRICTIVE. ON THE FORMER POINT, WEISS INDICATED THAT WHILE WE COULD NOT SAY WITH CERTAINTY WHAT POLICY THE LABOR GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE, US WAS CONFIDENT THAT AFTER PERIOD OF RELATIVELY SHORT REVIEW THEY WOULD CONFIRM APPROVAL OF THE DIEGO EXPANSION PLANS. ON THE QUESTION OF CONDITIONS OF USE, WEISS NOTED THAT DIEGO WAS BRITISH SOVEREIGN TERRITORY AND THAT AS SUCH USE OF THE FACILITY UNDER UNUSUAL OR OTHER THAN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD

REQUIRE AN OBLIGATION BY BOTH SIDES TO CONSULT AND REACH JOINT DECISION. HE ADDED THAT THIS WAS A FORMULATION IDENTICAL TO THAT WHICH GOVERNS OUR USE OF BRITISH BASES IN THE UK. WEISS MADE THE FINAL POINT THAT THE PARALLELISM OF US-UK INTERESTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA SHOULD IN PRACTICE BE A NON-INHIBITING FACTOR IN TERMS OF OPEN ACCESS TO AND USE OF DIEGO GARCIA.

4. GENERAL TONE OF THE HEARINGS WAS FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT. ON CONCLUSION BUCHANAN INFORMED US PRIVATELY THAT HE THOUGHT WEISS' TESTIMONY IN TANDEM WITH PREVIOUS ZURHELLEN TESTIMONY OF FEBRUARY 21 HAD EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTED ADMINISTRATION CASE FOR DIEGO EXPANSION PLANS. AS A RESULT, BUCHANAN SAID HE PERSONALLY DOUBTED THAT HOUSE CONSIDERATION OF THE DIEGO GARCIA AUTHORIZATION IN THE FY 74 DOD READINESS SUPPLEMENTAL WOULD BECOME A CONSEQUENTIAL ISSUE. WE WILL BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO DETERMINE VALIDITY OF BUCHANAN'S JUDGMENT FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF CURRENTLY SCHEDULED HOUSE HEARINGS WITH NOYES, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ISA, ON MARCH 12 AND ADMIRAL ZUMWALT, CNO, ON MARCH 19.

5. WEISS' TESTIMONY WAS CARRIED IN SOME DETAIL IN TODAY'S (MARCH 7) WASHINGTON POST UNDER BY-LINE OF MICHAEL GETLER. ARTICLE (BEING POUCHED) NOTABLY UNBALANCED IN SUMMARIZING WEISS' TESTIMONY PLAYED UP WEISS' JUDGMENT THAT NO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROBLEMS ANTICIPATED WITH NEW UK LABOR GOVERNMENT IN SECURING THEIR ENDORSEMENT OF DIEGO PROJECT AND WEISS' CONTENTION THAT LITTORAL REACTIONS TO THE DIEGO PROPOSALS "WERE FAR MORE RESTRAINED" THAN THE US HAD EXPECTED. ON LATTER POINT, GETLER N
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